

Whitney from Smithfield

November 12, 2016

Dear Angus King,

I am sure that you are getting thousands of letters due to recent events and of course you and your staff do not and cannot read them all. However, on the eve of a republican presidency, I wanted to briefly reach out and say what the ACA or Obamacare healthcare system has done for me.

I graduated from the University of Maine in 2013 with a degree in wildlife ecology. With the government shutdown, my classmates and I were unable to get hired for seasonal technician jobs and funding for environmental work because scarce. I struggled and applied to everything from wildlife agencies to minimum wage food service. I don't know how many bumps in the road you have been through, so I am not sure if you can understand. I am an Honor Roll Student with a science degree, I have been working since high school and put myself through college. In spite of that, I received an email from Hannaford saying I did not meet the qualifications to clean up shopping carts in the parking lot. It is hard to keep going after that, but I did. In the meantime though, no job, no healthcare.

Thanks to the ACA, I was able to stay on my family health insurance plan through unemployment. I did finally get employed in my field, but permanent, year-round jobs with benefits are the equivalent of winning the lottery. Many of us work seasonal jobs, building trails on the Appalachian Trail, rescuing lost hikers, managing volunteers, and running programs for veterans to reconnect with Maine's woods. We do good work in this state. Before the ACA we worked dangerous outdoor jobs that only provided minimum worker's comp. Those of us who work in Maine's woods protecting wildlife, building hiking trails, leading hikes for tourists, and teaching children about trees and how to stay safe when camping went to sleep every night praying that if there was an accident it happened during work hours. We fell through the cracks, invisible. But with the ACA and the tax credit, I could afford a silver plan, I could get dental for my teeth, could go to the doctor again, get flu shots and get my joints looked at.

It was life changing. I know it is not perfect but I am terrified of going back to before, where health and financial ruin was one wrong step away. It is terrifying to see Donald Trump flip flopping back and forth on a plan that has saved my co-worker's life when they could afford doctor's appointments and their Lyme was caught early. I understand why people don't like it, but what alternatives are there? I know you want to unite, that you said we are on the same team, but a true team member does not threaten the health and safety of another. A true team stands up for the threatened team member, they do not tell them to settle down and keep quiet for the veneer of unity. I hope you do work with Trump for the best of Maine, but I hope you and the moderates are prepared to stand up to him too. The rest of us, we need you.

Thank you,

Whitney